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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 29 November 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. DIALLO (Senegal)

- International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): Today the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienaable Rights of the Palestinian People is holding a solemn meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Samir Shihabi, President of the General Assembly; His Excellency Mr. Aurel Dragos Munteanu, President of the Security Council; His Excellency Mr. Stanley Kalpagé, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; Mr. James Jonah, Under-Secretary-General in the Department of Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship; and His Excellency Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Bureau of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), representative of Palestine. I should also like to welcome representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and liberation movements, and representatives of non-governmental organizations, members of the press and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this solemn meeting.

I now invite everyone present to rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of all those who have given their lives for the cause of the Palestinian people.

The participants observed a minute of silence.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I should now like to make a statement on behalf of the Committee.

Our meeting is taking place at a historic moment in the long struggle by the Palestinian people to regain its history, its identity and its national rights. Much blood has been shed and much suffering has taken place since the General Assembly, 44 years ago today, decided to partition the land of Palestine and called for the creation of two independent states, Arab and Jewish, joined in economic union, and for a special international regime for Jerusalem.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established to help redress the imbalance resulting from the creation of only one of those States and the dispossession of the Palestinian people. Over the years, the Committee has done its utmost to place the question of Palestine as a national issue on the international agenda and to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine based on respect for international legality and for the rights and interests of all the parties concerned.

Today, we feel that this goal may have come a step closer in the light of the important opening created by the conference held in Madrid under the co-sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union. Our Committee was particularly encouraged by the express wish of the co-sponsors to assist the parties to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement through direct negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The agreement reached at Madrid between the Palestinian and Israeli delegations on the basis of those resolutions indicates that the government of Israel is moving towards recognition of the Palestinian people

(The Chairman)

as its interlocutor and that progress may indeed be possible towards the realization of our long-standing objectives. The Madrid conference has shown conclusively that the question of Palestine is the core issue that needs to be addressed in efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and that the Palestinian people, through its recognized representatives, is a principal party in any negotiating process in this regard.

We hope that the spirit of good will and mutual respect that characterized the meeting in Madrid will continue in the next months. The Committee is under no illusion that the road is still extremely long and fraught with difficulties. The deep fears and mutual suspicions engendered by 44 years of conflict will not be easily overcome. There is an urgent need for measures to defuse the continuing tension and violence in the region, which is exacerbated by the dynamic of occupation and repression and the growing danger of extremism.

The Committee firmly believes that the restoration of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinians living in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, and for the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, would help create a climate more conducive to peace. The confiscation of land and building of settlements; the use of firearms to deal with demonstrators; the curfews and restrictions on freedom of movement and association; the continued detention of thousands of persons; the use of deportations and collective punishment; the separation of thousands of families, and the fetters imposed on the economic development of the occupied territory, must cease so that a meaningful peace process might move forward.

(The Chairman)

In numerous resolutions, the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, have expressed the consensus of the international community with regard to the legal obligations of Israel, the occupying Power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention and have called for implementation of its provisions. The fact that talks may be in progress between the parties, and outside of the United Nations framework, does not detract in any way from Israel's obligations to respect the Convention and to abide by the Security Council's resolutions.

There are many obvious measures that the occupying Power can take immediately in order to demonstrate its good will and readiness for peace, and without jeopardizing its security, and we call on the Government of Israel to act with wisdom and foresight, in response to the overwhelming desire for peace manifested both by the Palestinian people and by the Israeli people.

For its part, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will continue to do its utmost in accordance with its mandate, to contribute to the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on respect for the norms of international law, the United Nations Charter, and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Committee is of the view that interim arrangements worked out between the parties as a result of the process initiated at Madrid must eventually result in such a settlement if a durable peace, accepted and respected by all, is to be achieved.

The changing international circumstances have created a positive climate in which it is increasingly recognized that military solutions are ultimately unworkable and self-defeating, and that peace and security can only be achieved if the legitimate aspirations of all the parties to a conflict are met, avoiding notions of winners and losers.

(The Chairman)

Forty-four years ago, in partitioning Palestine, the United Nations undertook a great responsibility regarding the Palestinians and the Jews, who were thereby enjoined to share the land to which both laid exclusive claim. The intervening history of rejection, armed conflict, and occupation does not and cannot change this necessary approach to a just solution which is founded on internationally recognized principles and has the support of the entire international community, as well as of substantial sectors of the Israeli population.

As we celebrate today the anniversary of that historic decision, let us recommit ourselves to its implementation and to solidarity with the Palestinian people until its historic and just objective, sovereignty in its own land, is finally achieved.

Let us hope at last that that blessed land of Palestine, the cradle of revealed religions, will once again inspire both Israelis and Palestinians to gather together at the meeting place of history.

I now call on the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Samir Shihabi.

Mr. SHIHABI (President of the General Assembly): Madam Chairman, may I first of all express to you and to the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestine People, my appreciation for having been invited to take part in this special commemorative meeting.

Today we commemorate the International day of Solidarity with the Palestine people. Fourteen years ago, by its resolution 32/40B, the General Assembly decided to commemorate this day, 29 November, as an annual observance, in recognition of the need to strengthen and consolidate international support for the Palestinian people. The designation by the

(The President of the General Assembly)

United Nations of this day as a worldwide occasion for the reaffirmation of international solidarity with the Palestinian people reflects the international conviction that peace in the Middle East region must be based on the attainment of justice for the Palestinian people. This Day of Solidarity symbolizes the great importance which the General Assembly, in particular, attaches to the problem of Palestine, the full attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East.

The problem of Palestine has been a major concern of the United Nations ever since its establishment, and the Organization bears an historic responsibility towards ensuring its just settlement and a full restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. For over four decades now, the Palestinian people have been struggling resolutely for the recovery of their fundamental rights, including their right to self-determination. The United Nations has an indispensable role to play in this respect, especially in view of the fact that during the past 46 years of its existence the world Organization has adopted numerous resolutions in the General Assembly and the Security Council on the question of Palestine, most of which still remain to be implemented.

At a time when the world is witnessing a major relaxation in international tensions and when solutions to many regional conflicts are being facilitated by the new positive international climate, it is incumbent upon all of us, and in particular the United Nations, to keep the search for a political solution to the question of Palestine high on the international agenda. Now more than ever before, it is imperative for the United Nations to

(The President of the General Assembly)

play a central role in this process. It is urgent and indispensable for the Organization to ensure the implementation of its resolutions on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council which, in the final analysis, represent the basis for an internationally acceptable solution. It must be emphasized that while we seek the support of the United Nations, we must also abide by its resolutions and decisions.

The important positive developments that are currently taking place in the international arena reflect the aspirations of peoples to live in a world where peace, security and justice prevail. The progress made in this field at the international and regional levels provides a sound basis for solutions to all sensitive international problems, including the question of Palestine, which lies at the heart of the Middle East conflict.

It is imperative that the atmosphere of peace should extend to this region, so that it ceases to be a source of tension that might undermine the positive changes taking place in the world today. This objective can be achieved only through the application of United Nations resolutions pertaining to the occupation of territories by force, to the illegal practices which violate the United Nations Charter and international conventions, and full exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable national rights.

(The President of the General Assembly)

May I take this opportunity to commend the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, Mrs. Absa Claude Diallo of Senegal, for their continuing efforts in promoting a just solution to the problem of Palestine in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The observance of this International Day of Solidarity will once again reaffirm to the Palestinian people that the United Nations remains committed to its resolutions and decisions on Palestine and to the realization of their inalienable rights.

I should like to take this opportunity, Madam Chairman, to extend to you and to the entire Committee my sincere thanks for your great service to the objectives of the United Nations, and to the comity of nations at large, and to express my best wishes for a successful conclusion to your endeavours.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): As we are aware, the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, is abroad and, unfortunately, cannot participate in our meeting. I am pleased to call on Mr. James Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, who will read out the Secretary-General's message.

Mr. JONAH (Under-Secretary-General for the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship): I am pleased to deliver the Secretary-General's message, as follows:

"The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which we have gathered here to observe, is a solemn occasion that highlights the significance of the question of Palestine and reminds us, once again, of the enduring commitment of the United Nations to the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to a

(Mr. Jonah)

comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. As I have observed in the past, there is a wide measure of agreement within the international community that such a settlement should be based on three considerations: withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territories occupied since June 1967; acknowledgement of and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the region, including Israel, and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; and a satisfactory solution of the Palestinian problem based on the recognition of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination. In this connection, the question of Jerusalem remains of primary importance.

"Today's meeting, which has been organized in accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly, takes place in the light of the historic Middle East peace conference that was held in Madrid from 30 October through 1 November, and an initial round of bilateral discussions between the parties. One need only recall the circumstances prevailing in the region last year at this time to recognize the extent to which prospects for progress in the peace process have, in the interim, been enhanced.

"For my part, I have always maintained that no effort should be spared in the search for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the issue that lies at its core: the yearning of the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate political rights, including self-determination. In this connection, I have actively pursued the mandate that the General Assembly has since 1983 - and most recently in its resolution 45/68 of 6 December 1990 - entrusted to the

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Secretary-General with respect to the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East. As requested, in consultation with the Security Council, I was continuously in contact with leaders from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization in an effort to facilitate the convening of the conference. It is important to note that, whereas it was not possible to achieve agreement among the parties to participate in such a conference, the positions of the parties, and indeed of the Security Council itself, with respect to an international conference have evolved over the years.

"In this latter connection, you will recall that, following several weeks of intensive consultations, the Security Council, in conjunction with the adoption of its resolution 681 (1990) on 20 December 1990, issued a presidential statement concerning the method and approach for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. As for resolution 681 (1990) - itself a most significant decision of the Security Council regarding the situation in the occupied territories - I have undertaken steps towards the fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to me therein, including monitoring and observing the situation regarding Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation, and soliciting the views of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention concerning a possible meeting. Furthermore, I have, over the years, repeatedly joined the Security Council and the General Assembly in calling upon Israel to accept the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to all the territories occupied since 1967 and to abide scrupulously by the provisions of the Convention.

(Mr. Jonah)

"With the above-mentioned decisions of the Security Council in mind, I decided to reactivate the mission of the Special Representative to the Middle East, as called for in paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). The post had been served with great distinction by Ambassador Gunnar Jarring of Sweden in the years immediately following the adoption of resolution 242 (1967) in November 1967. While the mission had been dormant for a lengthy interval, it is important to recall that it was never officially ended. On 11 January 1991, Ambassador Jarring submitted his resignation, whereupon I announced my intention to designate a successor.

"On 21 March 1991, I informed the Security Council, in informal consultations, of my decision to appoint Ambassador Edouard Brunner of Switzerland as my Special Representative to the Middle East. For their part, the members of the Council welcomed this step. At the same time, in my remarks to the Council I acknowledged the importance of the initiative that had, at that stage, just been launched by the United States regarding the peace process. I reiterated that I have always supported bilateral initiatives in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and that, to this end, any step undertaken by Ambassador Brunner or myself would be aimed at assisting such efforts.

"Accordingly, I followed with keen interest the intensive and often arduous bilateral diplomatic efforts of the past few months that culminated in agreement by the parties to enter into a negotiating process, under the co-sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union, aimed at achieving - in the words of the letter of invitation to

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the peace conference - 'a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement through direct negotiations on two tracks, between Israel and the Arab states, and between Israel and the Palestinians'. It is important to note in this connection that, although it is being conducted outside the framework of the United Nations, this process has the support of the parties concerned and has as its basis Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which have long been recognized as the cornerstone of a comprehensive settlement.

(Mr. Jonah)

"During my 10 years in office, there have been few issues to which I have attached greater importance than the search for peace in the Middle East and a just resolution of the question of Palestine. As my mandate draws to a close, I should like to underline my earnest hope that the momentum that has been generated by the Madrid talks will be sustained and that the lasting peace that has so long been denied to all the peoples of the Middle East will indeed become a reality.

"Madam Chairman, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, under your able and dedicated leadership, has always worked untiringly to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. I should like to take this opportunity to commend you, the Bureau and all the members of the Committee on your efforts and to extend my best wishes for the success of your most important endeavour."

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I should like to thank Mr. James Jonah for reading out the important message from the Secretary-General. I request him to convey to His Excellency Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar the Committee's thanks both for his encouraging words and for the tireless efforts he has always made to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, as well as for his tireless support for the Committee's work.

I now have the honour and pleasure of calling on His Excellency Ambassador Aurel Dragos Munteanu, President of the Security Council.

Mr. MUNTEANU (President of the Security Council): Madam Chairman, may I convey at the outset my deep appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the

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invitation extended to me in my capacity as President of the Security Council to participate in this special meeting marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is for me both a pleasure and a privilege to join in this important annual event which expresses solidarity with the Palestinian people and the enduring commitment of the international community to the achievement of a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East question. We remain ever mindful that efforts to reach this goal represent not only the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, but also the possibility of bringing stability to a particularly troubled region of the world, thereby fostering international peace and security.

As is well known, the Security Council has been closely associated with the persistent efforts to forge an equitable solution to the Middle East situation. It has been called upon many times to direct its urgent attention to the crises engendered by the conflict and its consequences. The members of the Security Council reaffirm the need for scrupulous observance of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is fully applicable to all the occupied territories. In so doing, the Council has always been aware of the magnitude of the Palestinian problem, and it remains seized of many aspects of the situation in the Middle East, including the question of the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights. For its part, therefore, the Security Council will continue to devote attention to the problem with a view to seeking a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the peoples of the region as a whole.

As President of the Council, I followed with keen interest, as I am sure all members of the Council did, developments leading to the convening of the

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Madrid peace conference on 30 October 1991. That historic meeting represents a new beginning - a new opportunity to establish a mechanism capable of building a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. It is particularly gratifying that the parties involved - including the two sponsors of the Conference, the United States and the Soviet Union - consider Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) to be the basis for any search for a settlement of the Middle East conflict, including the Palestinian question. This promising new beginning - memorable for the fact that for the first time all parties to the conflict, including the representatives of the Palestinian people, took an active part in the process - gives reason to hope that the conference will resume very shortly to tackle the important substantive issues that lie ahead on the road to peace. The members of the Security Council call on all the parties involved in the peace process launched at Madrid to cooperate in efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement, and in particular a solution to the Palestinian problem in all its aspects.

Guided by the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter, the Security Council will continue its efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, for the benefit of all parties concerned, including the Palestinian people.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I thank His Excellency Ambassador Munteanu, President of the Security Council, for his important statement.

I now have the honour to call on Mr. Chafic Al-Hout, member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who will read out a message from His Excellency President Yasser Arafat.

Mr. AL-HOUT (Palestine) (interpretation from Arabic): Madam Chairman, it is an honour to read out to you the message from President Yasser Arafat, President of the State of Palestine, the President of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"His Excellency Mr. Samir Shihabi, President of the General Assembly;

"Mr. Aurel Dragos Munteanu, President of the Security Council;

"Her Excellency Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo, Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People;

"The Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories;

"Mr. James Jonah, Representative of the Secretary-General.

"My greetings to you all. On the occasion of your celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is my pleasure to extend to Your Excellency, and through you to all the members of your distinguished Committee, my sincerest brotherly greetings and best wishes for continued success in your noble mission to implement the resolutions of the United Nations and the determination of the international community to enable our people to restore and practice their inalienable national rights.

"I would like to express to you, on behalf of our struggling Palestinian people, on behalf of my brothers the members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and on my own behalf, our high esteem for your assistance to and support of our just cause and the legitimate struggle of our peoples and its national intifadah to put

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an end to Israeli occupation and to attain a just peace in Palestine and in the Middle East region through the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine and the Middle East conflict.

(Mr. Al-Hout, Palestine)

"I highly appreciate the continuous efforts made in every part of the world by this Committee to achieve the noble objectives of providing clear information about our just cause and of winning support and assistance for the restoration of the rights of our people to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish the independent State of Palestine.

"I take this opportunity also to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, particularly since he will be leaving the Organization in a few weeks. I thank him for his continuous support for and assistance to our just cause and to our people's struggle. We especially appreciate his constructive efforts for peace in our region and throughout the world, for the full implementation of United Nations resolutions and for upholding and implementing the Charter.

"It is my pleasure also to congratulate sincerely His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, the new Secretary-General elect. It is our strong hope that he will live up to the trust the international community has placed in him and that he will strive to achieve the purposes of the United Nations and attain international peace and security. There can be no international peace and security without peace, security and stability in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region, on the basis of justice and the resolutions of the United Nations.

"Today's commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is taking place at a decisive time for the Palestinian cause. As members know, the Madrid peace conference was held on 30 October 1991, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the principle of land for peace, under the co-sponsorship of the United States of America and the Soviet Union,

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and with the participation of all the parties concerned with the Middle East conflict. We cannot fail today to express our deep appreciation for the constructive efforts of the two Presidents of conference in order that the peace effort could begin.

"Members also know that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, has made an outstanding constructive contribution with the aim of facilitating the convening of the conference despite the unjust conditions, constant provocation and serious obstacles imposed by the Israeli Government to obstruct the convening of the conference. Our agreement to participate in the conference has been in response to the peaceful will of our people, which was expressed in the resolutions adopted at the nineteenth and twentieth sessions of the Palestine National Council and in the resolutions of the Palestine Central Council. It responded also to the general international climate, which favours a new world order in which peace, security and stability would prevail on the basis of the United Nations Charter and on the basis of justice and protection of the right of peoples to freedom, peace, security and the enjoyment of human rights.

"At the same time, the Palestinian people in the occupied territories continues its broad national intifadah and its legitimate struggle, which have been accepted by international forums, to put an end to Israeli occupation and achieve a just peace in Palestine and throughout the region on the basis of the principle upon which Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) were based, namely the inadmissibility of the acquisition of the land of others by force.

"But despite the peace process and the convening of the Madrid peace conference, the Israeli Government persists in its aggressive, repressive

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policies against the Palestinian people. Rather than adopting confidence-building measures, it engages in harassment and places major obstacles intended to obstruct and frustrate peace efforts and to divert them from the achievement of their objectives.

"In that context, the repeated Israeli acts of aggression and air raids against our people wherever they may be in southern Lebanon have been perpetrated; the iron-fist policy has been escalated; Israel's oppression of our people in the occupied territories has been intensified; the feverish settlement programme in the Palestinian and the other occupied Arab territories continues and gathers more momentum with forced Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Ethiopia and the settlement of those immigrants in new settlements in the occupied territories. This contravenes all United Nations resolutions and defies the will of the international community, which views those settlements as illegal and an obstacle to peace. In addition, there has been the recent Knesset resolution, insisting on the annexation of the occupied Golan Heights. This is yet another act of provocation and defiance by the Israelis, not only vis-à-vis the parties directly concerned in the conflict in that territory but also vis-à-vis the two Presidents of the Madrid conference, the international community at large and the resolutions of the United Nations which have declared the annexation of Al-Quds and the Golan to be null and void.

"The most recent aggression against Jerusalem's Islamic Court, on Monday 18 November 1991, by a combined force of Israeli police, intelligence officers and border guards was yet another act of defiance and provocation by the Israeli Government.

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"The convening of the peace conference in Madrid is a new opening to a difficult path, but a path towards a noble objective - namely, the establishment of a just peace in the area on the basis of resolutions of international legitimacy and the right of our peoples to self-determination. It is in fact an important historic opportunity that we should not miss, and it should not be met by efforts to impede and deplete, and by other such actions of harassment.

"The Palestinian people, who have struggled for half a century for the right to a free, independent and dignified life on their land, as enjoyed by the other peoples of the area and of the world, has the moral and material courage to deal constructively and positively with it. Peace, security and stability go hand in hand with right and justice, and the time and the opportunity have come for right and justice for all Palestinian people to be achieved in order that there may be peace, security and stability for both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples, and for all the peoples of the region.

"We take this opportunity to convey our deep thanks and gratitude to the peaceful forces in Israel, in the various parties and influential trends in Israel, and all the Israelis calling for recognition of the national right of the Palestinian people and for a dialogue to be opened with the Palestine Liberation Organization, and all the Israelis who support the principle of exchanging land for peace as a basis for a lasting and just peace in the area. We should like to thank them because with open minds and enlightened hearts they are facing the trends of darkness and extremism and intransigence, in order to build a new and

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secure and peaceful life in the future for this generation and generations to come.

"Through this celebration today, we should like to make an urgent call to your Committee, and to the United Nations and the international community as a whole, for the need to provide international protection for our peoples and to work to put an end to Israel's violations of the resolutions of the United Nations and its Charter, including putting an end to the establishment of settlements, the expropriation of land and water resources, and putting an end to the oppressive and coercive policies practised by the occupation authorities against our peoples and against their sacred entities, in order to give a new impetus to the peace operation and provide it with the necessary elements of confidence for its success. And this requires a greater role for the United Nations in this present peace operation.

"I should like, in conclusion, to express our deep thanks and gratitude and appreciation to you, wishing you continued success in your noble tasks, so that you are able to carry out the tasks of your Committee and to participate in achieving a just and lasting peace in our area and restoring the enjoyment by our peoples of their inalienable national rights. I should also like to extend our thanks to Mr. James Jonah, who has conveyed to us the message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations."

This message is signed by Mr. Yasser Arafat, President of the State of Palestine and President of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I should like to thank Mr. Al-Hout, and ask him to convey our most sincere thanks to His Excellency President Yasser Arafat for his important message. I should like to assure President Yasser Arafat, and through him the Palestinian people, of the firm determination of the Committee to continue and intensify its efforts within the framework of its mandate to contribute to the search for a global, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise as rapidly as possible all of its inalienable national rights.

On behalf of the Committee I should like once again to thank the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the Under-Secretary-General for having participated in the first part of our meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 11.06 a.m. and resumed at 11.08 a.m.

Mr. KALPAGE (Chairman, Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories): I wish to convey to you, Madam Chairman, and to the other members of the Committee my felicitations and good wishes and those of the other members of the Special Committee, whose chairmanship is held by Sri Lanka. I am grateful for the invitation to participate in this meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Since its establishment by the General Assembly in December 1968, the Special Committee has endeavoured to provide in its reports a faithful and accurate picture of the human-rights situation in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. This year, owing to the negative attitude of the Israeli authorities with regard to the Special Committee, as well as their persistent refusal to cooperate, the Special Committee has once again been prevented from visiting the occupied territories and carrying out in situ investigations with regard to the human-rights situation.

The Committee has nevertheless striven to fulfil its mandate to the best of its ability by reflecting in its report relevant information - both oral and written and from a wide range of sources - on the human-rights situation in the occupied territories. The Special Committee has taken particular care to rely on information, including reports from the Israeli press and other news media in the occupied territories, that has not been contradicted by the Government of Israel.

In doing so the Special Committee has, over the years, expressed the hope that the alarming picture presented by its reports will serve to further sensitize the international community to the plight of the population of the occupied territories, while encouraging meaningful efforts to secure an improvement in the human-rights conditions prevailing in these territories.

(Mr. Kalpage, Chairman, Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories)

The Special Committee has examined and analysed the information and evidence put before it. It has reached the conclusion, as reflected in its twenty-third report to the General Assembly, that the human-rights situation of the Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories has deteriorated to such an extent that this population is reaching a state of mere survival. The particular circumstances that people had to face recently as a result of the Gulf crisis and the ensuing war and the constant deterioration in their living conditions represent a serious challenge for the international community. If another major explosion in the region is to be avoided, there will have to be sustained efforts to convince Israel that it must put an end to its human-rights practices in the occupied territories.

The Israeli occupation authorities continued to resort to such practices during the period under review. They continue to use harsh methods in trying to quell the popular struggle, and these have resulted in heavy loss of life and in severe and widespread injuries. The violence and repression have caused considerable suffering in all segments of the population, including very young children, women and old people. Hardly a single locality in the occupied territories has been spared. Day-to-day life - already characterized by constant unrest, random acts of violence, clashes between Arab civilians and Israeli soldiers, tax raids, scores of arrests and acts of aggression by Israeli settlers - has become even more precarious as a result of the severe deprivation endured during and after the Persian Gulf war.

(Mr. Kalpage, Chairman, Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories)

The prolonged and continuous curfews imposed upon the Arab population of the occupied territories during that period made access to basic needs, such as food and medical treatment, difficult - sometimes practically impossible. The damage inflicted upon agriculture and the loss of income suffered by several thousand Arab workers as a result of these curfews have contributed to the further deterioration of already-critical living conditions. Other kinds of collective punishment have also been resorted to. I refer, for example, to the demolition of houses. It is alleged that this practice, which usually affects a large number of innocent people, is engaged in for security reasons.

The administration of justice too has been marked by a deterioration in human-rights standards. Palestinians and other Arabs have very often been denied legal safeguards, including the right to a fair trial. On the other hand, it seems that Israelis charged with killing or ill-treating Arab civilians have usually benefited from leniency quite disproportionate to the gravity of the offence. Several thousand Palestinians, including minors and women, continue to be detained in various detention centres, some of which are inside Israel itself. There have been repeated complaints about various forms of torture and ill-treatment suffered by prisoners, including minors.

The illegal policy of expelling Palestinians from the occupied territories, allegedly for security reasons - a policy that clearly violates the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and was halted for a few months - was reactivated recently. The Israeli authorities have also resumed the expulsion of Palestinians who do not have a valid "staying visa", and they continue to settle new immigrants in the occupied territories in

(Mr. Kalpage, Chairman, Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories)

spite of the wave of protest from the international community. Recently we witnessed the creation of new settlements, including those for newly-arrived Jewish immigrants, in the occupied territories, as well as the deliberate policy of drastically expanding and increasing existing settlements. This policy indicates a deliberate intention to modify the demographic composition of the occupied territories.

There are still various obstacles to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms. Freedom of movement - almost completely abolished during the Persian Gulf War - is still severely limited, as is freedom of expression, religion and association. The prolonged closure of educational institutions, the denial of proper teaching facilities and the harassment of teachers and students have contributed to a noticeable drop in the previously high standard of education.

Since the adoption, last August, of the Special Committee's twenty-third report the human-rights situation in the occupied territories has continued to cause a high degree of preoccupation. A climate of fear, violence and repression continues to characterize the day-to-day life of the Arab civilians who are faced with constantly deteriorating living conditions. In view of the gravity of these developments my two colleagues on the Special Committee and I appeal once more to the international community to assume its responsibilities towards the Palestinians and other Arabs of the occupied territories by taking urgent measures to ensure the restoration of the basic human rights and freedoms of which those peoples have long been deprived.

(Mr. Kalpage, Chairman, Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories)

It is our sincere hope that the process that has been initiated with the Madrid conference on the Middle East will pave the way for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, taking into account the rights of all peoples in the area, including the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I now call upon Ambassador Darko Silovic, Permanent Representative of Yugoslavia, who will read out a statement from the Yugoslav Government on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia): I am greatly honoured to address this solemn meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People as a representative of Yugoslavia, current Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Non-aligned countries have always attached greatest importance to the question of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which have been denied for so long. The Movement's solidarity with the Palestinian people has been staunch and long lasting. It has been consistently expressed in the Movement's documents and in its efforts on the international scene, as well as in its activities within the United Nations as a whole, especially in the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The Government of Yugoslavia sent a message to the Committee on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, which I should like to read out now. The message reads as follows:

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

"The encouraging changes in today's world towards the creation of a new system of international relations have also been reflected in the Middle East region. We are observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People with justified optimism that this longest-running and most complex hotbed of crisis may be finally resolved in a peaceful way.

"The peace conference on the Middle East embarked upon recently in Madrid represents the most decisive step so far in endeavouring to find a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis and the Palestinian question, which is at its core. It is encouraging indeed that the parties that have confronted each other for decades sat for the first time at the negotiating table and that an agreement has been reached to continue direct bilateral negotiations between Arab States and Israel.

"Only a comprehensive and just solution to the Middle East problem as a whole can bring about the lasting peace and unimpeded development of the States of the Middle East. These are the very goals advocated by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries ever since its inception, goals to the realization of which Yugoslavia has consistently contributed its share.

"The role of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is gaining importance in the forthcoming negotiating process, which undoubtedly will be arduous but which we expect to be beneficial.

"Yugoslavia, as current Chairman of the Movement, steadfastly supports the Committee's activities. The Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as its legitimate representative, can

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

count on the full solidarity of Yugoslavia and of the non-aligned countries in the realization of their inalienable rights."

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I now call upon Ambassador Mustafa Aksin, Permament Representative of Turkey, who will make a statement on behalf of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

Mr. AKSIN (Turkey): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the current Chairman of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, His Excellency Mr. Hikmet Cetin, the new Foreign Minister of Turkey.

Today is 29 November, and we solemnly observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people here in the United Nations and beyond throughout the world.

The Palestinian people have been the victims of perhaps the greatest injustice inflicted on any nation in recent history. For more than four decades that people has been driven from their homes and turned into refugees, their political rights denied, their human rights massively violated, their livelihoods ruined, their daily existence rendered miserable beyond description. These brave people have endured and suffered, always nurturing the expectation that somehow the world would right the many wrongs that had been inflicted on them.

Unfortunately, the situation of the Palestinian people has progressively worsened with each successive phase of the Middle East conflict. Is it any wonder, then, that after exercising patience and restraint for so many years the Palestinians have exploded in the form of their intifadah against the injustice of an occupation that gets more oppressive with the passage of time? For four years now we have witnessed and admired both the courage and the self-restraint of the protesters, who have defied all the measures taken

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

by the Israeli occupiers, making their voices heard and asserting their basic rights.

On this 29 November we must all pledge ourselves once again to strive to attain certain basic objectives. The injustice inflicted on the Palestinians must be reversed. A peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine must be sought and found. The question of Palestine is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, and peace and security in the region will continue to elude us unless we find a solution to this question. We pray that the positive developments of recent weeks, which culminated in the convening of the Madrid conference, will continue and that the just struggle of the Palestinian people will result in a peaceful settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In this connection, I should like to pay a tribute to the statesmanship displayed by the Palestinian leadership in overcoming all the obstacles placed in their path. This statesmanship has given the Palestinians a new stature in the world, and it has also made a very significant contribution to the ongoing peace process.

The noble struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights has always enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the membership of the United Nations. That support has been forthcoming because the Palestinian struggle has been a just struggle for principles that are embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. The wide support for Palestinian rights has also been based on the firm belief that peace and security in the Middle East are dependent on justice being done to the Palestinian people.

It is this general support for the Palestinian cause that led to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 3376 (XXX) on 10 November 1975. In that resolution the General Assembly established the

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In the years that have elapsed since then the Committee has helped focus the attention of the international community on Palestine, carried out a very effective programme of public relations on behalf of the Palestinians and given strong backing and encouragement to their struggle for dignity and recognition. I think I can be allowed to say that all of the members of the Committee are proud of the services they have rendered to a worthy cause whose ultimate objectives are justice and peace.

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

In recent years the Committee has had the good fortune of having as its Chairman the Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo. Ambassador Diallo has served the Committee with great distinction and total dedication and it was with great sadness that we learned that she will be leaving us to assume other duties for her Government. We shall miss her gracious and warm personality. We shall certainly miss her diplomatic skills. Above all, we shall never forget her singular contribution to the success of the Committee and her services to the Palestinian cause. I should like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Diallo for all that she has done.

Another international body that has been a steadfast supporter of the Palestinian people is the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), on whose behalf I have the honour to address this Committee. The very existence of the OIC is the result of an outrage committed against Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest shrines, located in Arab Jerusalem.

Since the inception of the OIC, the Palestinian people have remained at the centre of its concerns. Just how strong this concern is can be seen in the final communiqué of the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held in Istanbul from 4 to 8 August 1991. I shall read out the first paragraph of the chapter in the final communiqué dealing with political affairs:

> "The Conference affirmed its active solidarity with and total support for the just struggle of the valiant Palestinian people. It saluted with great pride the heroic steadfastness and immense sacrifices of the Palestinian people, the continuation and escalation of their

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

blessed intifadah against the repressive practices of the Israeli forces of occupation, and their valiant resistance to its brutal and barbaric methods. It called on member States to extend all forms of political and economic support to the Palestinian people."

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I want to recall the OIC's unwavering support for and complete solidarity with the Palestinian people. It is our most sincere wish to see this gifted people, the Palestinians, enjoying the blessings of peace, freedom, security and self-determination. Few have sacrificed more to achieve these objectives. We salute their struggle and reiterate our full support.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I should like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Aksin, Permanent Representative of Turkey, for his kind words addressed to me. I also thank him for his important statement on behalf of the President of the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The OIC's support for the Palestinian people in their long and just struggle has been constant.

I now have the honour and pleasure of calling on His Excellency Mr. Muhammad El-Farra, Under-Secretary-General for Palestinian Affairs of the League of Arab States, who will speak on behalf of the League.

Mr. EL-FARRA (League of Arab States) (interpretation from Arabic): Here we meet again on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in order to declare that we are intensifying our joint efforts to apply international legality and to achieve a just solution to the problem in order to restore peace to the region.

I should like to put on record the League's appreciation, Madam Chairman, and members of the Committee, of your constant efforts to enable the

(Mr. El-Farra, League of Arab States)

Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and to put an end to its sufferings. We are grateful to you for the important role you perform personally in order to make the Palestinian cause known, to support it and to remind the international community of its responsibility towards our people.

The General Assembly's resolution calling for the annual celebration of this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an expression of the interest of the General Assembly and of the entire world in Palestine and the rights of its people.

This international responsibility is all the greater in that the situation in the occupied territories has been aggravated by the inhuman policies pursued by Israel. The international community is called upon to continue its efforts to achieve the optimum peaceful solution. We hope that the international peace conference will make it possible to render justice to the Palestinian people; otherwise, Israel will continue to be a source of constant threat to the region and to international peace.

Israel is racing against time to build settlements and to completely dominate the occupied territories with all their resources. It is trying to obstruct the peace talks. Voices are being raised in Israel against the return of the land, and against the halting of the settler-colonialist programme.

The intensification of settlement is swallowing up more and more land. Settlements are proliferating like cancer all over the occupied territories. If the current negotiations between the concerned parties are to succeed, the Israeli settler-colonialist programme must stop forthwith so that a healthy

(Mr. El-Farra, League of Arab States)

climate may be created for the negotiations. If the Zionist policy is allowed to pursue all its expansionist dreams, not only will extremism that defies international legaltiy prevail, but also the situation will become more complicated, to the detriment of the rights of the Palestinian people.

We should not forget that the Israeli policy of repression remains unchanged. The policy of the iron fist against the inhabitants of the occupied territories still continues with all its brutal, inhuman practices. Israel, in the name of human rights, is taking over our territories, emptying them of their legitimate inhabitants and implanting in their place immigrant populations from abroad. The Israeli occupation with its habitual brutality and violence, goes on persecuting Palestinians in their homes, on the streets, in churches, mosques, schools and universities. It is persecuting them in the towns, in the villages and in the camps, attacking their persons, their families, their land, their beliefs, their sacred sites and their property. History teaches us that settler colonialism is based on repression, torture and the displacement of populations. This policy of repression is inhuman. It will disappear only with the end of the occupation. For all these reasons, I restate the need for an immediate end to this colonization. We must also block all attempts at delaying tactics in the negotiations.

The occupation authorities would be mistaken if they were to think that Palestinian people will give up its territory and its rights. New generations have already faced Israeli cruelty with unprecedented resistance. Future generations will follow their example. Men, women and children will continue to fight, and will carry on their intifadah in order to regain their legitimate national rights. Israel's arrogance, there is no doubt, leads it

(Mr. El-Farra, League of Arab States)

to defy the two super Powers, the co-sponsors of the conference. It defies the international community and the efforts to build a new world order. We hope that, in the face of this defiance, we shall adopt a decisive stand that would restore justice and establish an equitable durable peace for all in the region.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I thank His Excellency Mr. El-Farra, Under-Secretary-General for Palestinian Affairs of the League of Arab States, for his important statement.

I now have the honour and pleasure of calling on His Excellency Ambassador Hassan Ali Hussain Al-Ni'mah, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, to read out a message from His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar and Chairman of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I now call on the representative of Qatar, who will read out a message from His Highness, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, Chairman of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Mr. AL-NI'MAH (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): I have been honoured by His Excellency Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar and current Chairman of the Gulf Cooperation Council, who has charged me with reading out his message addressed to your Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of today's meeting on the fourteenth anniversary of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

"It gives me great pleasure to participate today in this celebration under the aegis of your Committee, which has made sincere and persistent efforts to support the Palestinian people, a matter which deserves our appreciation and praise. It is an occasion that allows our Governments and peoples to demonstrate our commitment to the principles of freedom and our love of peace and justice, which we hope will prevail for all peoples of the world, including the people of Palestine.

"We pay tribute to the people of Palestine for its courage in struggling for its dignity and freedom and in defence of its legitimate national rights which have been recognized by the international community. We affirm in this gathering our solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people in resisting the aggression that has changed the lives of the Palestinians into a hell of suffering and injustice.

(Mr.Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

"The Palestinian people, which has languished under Israel's occupation of its land, has been subjected to every form of persecution, maltreatment, humiliation and injustice. And yet, it has not knuckled under to the usurper and occupier. It has rebelled, by its intifadah, against injustice. Its weapon has been its faith in the justice of its cause and the stones with which it has faced the forces of occupation in order not to play into the hands of those forces and give them the pretext of resorting to the bloody repression that they are accustomed to indulge in. In so doing, the Palestinian people has paid a high price indeed in the lives that have been lost, the innocent who have been injured or imprisoned, the houses that have been demolished and their owners who have been deported and deprived of their right to return to their land, the detainees, including children and minors, who have been tortured, in addition to all forms of discrimination on the basis of language, religion and political belief.

"The occupation forces have persisted in changing the features of Palestinian lands, have usurped the historical and cultural sites and have desecrated sacred sites in Al-Quds and other places. The latest act of desecration was their attack on the Islamic jurisprudence court in Jerusalem and confiscation of Awqaf documents in the West Bank, a matter that shocked and angered the Islamic and Arab worlds.

"The United Nations has addressed the question of Palestine and has investigated Israel's practices in the occupied territories. It has adopted a number of resolutions aimed at achieving justice for the Palestinians. However, Israel has persisted in its actions. Daily we hear statements characterized by intransigence, inflexibility and

(Mr.Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

arrogance devoid of any sign of an intention to live in peace with its neighbours as Israel claims.

"As for the Palestinians and Arabs, they have all demonstrated the desired response to international endeavours to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East. They have shown maturity, rationality and pragmatism commensurate with the objectives of peace in the region. Lately we have witnessed a significant development in the question of Palestine, that is, the peace process, which began in Madrid last October. That process is still proceeding along its planned stages aimed at eventually finding comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East region so that the peoples of this region may later on focus on the development of their societies and in building a better future for their children.

"We extend our appreciation to the Palestinian people for having accepted to participate in the peace process. They have shown their good faith, a positive spirit, flexibility and wisdom. Unfortunately, this was not reciprocated by the Israeli side, which clings to its extremist postures that run counter to the goal of peace. The Israelis persist in their rejection of the principle of 'land for peace' and in the building of illegal settlements in the occupied territories.

"The international community is waiting for the Israelis to demonstrate good faith and a genuine desire to reach the lasting peace without which the situation in the region will never be stabilized. The cause of the Palestinian people and Israel's denial of that people's inalienable rights is the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Once we arrive at a solution of the question of Palestine that satisfies the

(Mr.Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

aspirations of the Palestinians, the Arab States will in turn be satisfied.

"If Israel really wants to live in peace, it should withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories of not only the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, but also of Al-Quds and the Syrian Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon, in consonance with the Charter and relevant United Nations resolutions concerning the inadmissibility of the annexation of territories by force and the illegality of occupying the territories of others. Once this withdrawal takes place, the circle of peace will widen and become durable and comprehensive.

"Détente in international relations augurs well and raises hopes that all efforts made in the peace process will be crowned with the success we have long waited for. For half a century we have waited. Many lives have been lost and tremendous human and material resources have been wasted.

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

"The State of Qatar firmly believes that resolving the question of Palestine is the only way to achieve peace in the Middle East. Unless this question is resolved in a way that guarantees the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent state, peace will not be established in the region, and the conflict that threatens international peace and security will continue.

"The State of Qatar, given its belief in the just cause of the Palestinian people, reiterates its support for the peace conference which was launched in Madrid with the participation of all concerned parties and extends its deepest appreciation and gratitude to your Committee for the efforts it has exerted. We reaffirm once again our support for and solidarity with these efforts. We are certain that the Palestinian people, with the support of all these noble endeavours to attain the rights of the Palestinian people - the right to regain its freedom and to establish its independent state on its national soil - will definitely achieve its desired objective, namely freedom and independence."

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): I thank His Excellency Ambassador Hassan Ali Hussain Al-Ni'mah, Permanent Representative of Qatar, and I ask him to convey to His Highness Sheik Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar and Chairman of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Committee's sincere thanks for the important message he has sent us.

I now have the pleasure of calling on Ms. Colleen McGuire, representative of the International Co-ordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine.

Ms. McGUIRE (International Co-Ordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine) (ICCP)): I am most honoured to greet you on behalf of the International Co-ordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine - the ICCP. I send greetings from the ICCP office in Geneva and from the ICCP Chairperson, Mr. Don Betz, who was unfortunately unable to be present today. I further send you greetings from the 1,315 Non-Governmental Organizations throughout the world that are actively working on a peaceful and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

We Non-Governmental Organizations thank the United Nations for allowing us to address this Committee on the historic occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

This past year has presented a formidable challenge to Non-Governmental Organizations working for peace in Palestine. We witnessed an invasion and occupation of a sovereign nation this past year; I am of course referring to Iraq and Kuwait. We were stunned when a year ago today, 29 November 1990, the Security Council passed a crucial resolution. As you recall, the language of that resolution allowed the United States to interpret it to mean that it could respond with unlimited and terrorizing force against the people of Iraq. We were appalled that that resolution was passed on 29 November 1991. Non-Governmental Organizations denounce any use of force to resolve conflicts.

We look to the United Nations to employ consistency and equity. For almost a quarter of a century there has existed another illegal occupation in the Middle East by a foreign Power over another people, and we expect the United Nations to treat Israel's 24-year-long illegal occupation of Palestine with a seriousness and resolve commensurate to that demonstrated by this body

(Ms. McGuire, ICCP)

during the Gulf War. I am not suggesting, of course, that we have another resolution that allows for use of force, but - I repeat - we expect the United Nations to treat this with commensurate seriousness and resolve, because we Non-Governmental Organizations do see a double standard with respect to Palestine, and particularly because Israel's belligerent presence in the occupied territories is immoral, illegal and racist.

I ask each governmental representative here today: How would you feel if your country had likewise been occupied for 24 years by a foreign nation? Just think how you would feel if 70 per cent of your country's land were confiscated by a foreign Power. Israel has confiscated 70 per cent of the land in the West Bank; in addition, 50 per cent of the land in Gaza has been confiscated by Israel. I do not believe that you or your people would tolerate the evisceration of your sovereign rights if your country were occupied by a foreign nation. That is why we expect the United Nations to continue playing a role in bringing about the independence of Palestine.

We Non-Governmental Organizations unanimously recognize and support the intifadah as a national liberation struggle for the achievement of the State of Palestine and for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people have a right to self-determination and statehood as much as the people of any country represented in this room, and there is no legitimate reason why they have had to wait this long. We Non-Governmental Organizations vigorously support the Palestinian people's efforts to achieve this most elementary of human rights. We look to and expect the United Nations to play a continuing role in ensuring the Palestinians' right to statehood.

(Ms. McGuire, ICCP)

At the Eighth United Nations International Non-Governmental Organizations Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held in Vienna, Austria, from 28 to 30 August 1991, we International Non-Governmental Organizations affirmed our conviction that the conflict can be resolved only through an international conference under United Nations auspices at which all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), are represented on an equal footing. We denounced the United States Government's manoeuvrings to prevent an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations.

Our concerns at the August 1991 ICCP meeting were confirmed at the Madrid Conference. Official PLO representatives were precluded from attending, and the role of the United Nations was exceedingly diminished. None the less, we Non-Governmental Organizations support the current negotiations as interim steps toward the long-term goal of self-determination and statehood for the Palestinian people. We hope the negotiations enable Palestinians to obtain temporary relief from the onerous conditions inherent in a military occupation.

To mark the twenty-fourth anniversary of the occupation in June 1991, North American Non-Governmental Organizations, with the support of the ICCP in Geneva, met with ambassadors and/or representatives of 13 of the 15 States on the Security Council, and we urged the members of that body to focus all their efforts on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 681 (1990).

(Ms. McGuire, ICCP)

As you all know, resolution 681 (1990) calls upon the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to ensure Israel's respect for its obligations under the Convention in accordance with article 1. In the light of resolution 681 (1990), at the Vienna meeting in August 1991, the non-governmental organizations called for the establishment of a United Nations force to protect the Palestinian people from the terror and repression they face daily under occupation. It bears repeating that we consider it most urgent that the United Nations should provide immediate and sustained protection for the Palestinian people under occupation.

International non-governmental organizations have recently set up a network to coordinate the gathering and dissemination of information regarding Palestinian children. The campaign will focus on such themes as: no more Israeli violence against Palestinian children - they have a right to protection; no more closing of Palestinian schools - they have a right to education; and no more deportation of mothers and fathers - Palestinian children have a right to a family. As non-governmental organizations steadfastly pursue this campaign, we call on the United Nations, pursuant to resolution 681 (1990), likewise to take all measures to protect the children and people of Palestine.

The most pressing task immediately facing North American non-governmental organizations is to ensure that, on 10 January 1992, the United States Congress does not vote to grant Israel's request for $10 billion in loan guarantees to "absorb" Soviet Jews. It is certain that Israel will use this money to create and further expand illegal settlements on Palestinian land. These settlements unequivocally violate article 49, paragraph 6, of the Fourth Geneva Convention, prohibiting an occupying Power from transferring its

(Ms. McGuire, ICCP)

citizens into occupied territories. Already Israeli Jewish citizens comprise 13 per cent of the population in the occupied territories. North American non-governmental organizations are furiously lobbying Congress to oppose this vote, which so obviously jeopardizes the peace process. At Vienna last August, ICCP called on the Security Council and all Governments to institute sanctions against Israel for its occupation and settlement policy.

We non-governmental organizations thank the United Nations for all its efforts in supporting international non-governmental organizations in the pursuit of our tasks, programmes and agendas. We deeply appreciate your confidence in our work. Inspired by the determination of the Palestinian people themselves, we shall continue our work until United Nations resolution 181 (II) is fully implemented and Palestine is a sovereign, independent nation.

Today, I noticed in the lobby of the United Nations building a lovely exhibit commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and, while perusing the statistics and facts, I realized that no mention whatever was made about which refugees had been refugees for the longest period. I think that it may be the Palestinians.

In the interests of peace and justice, for each of us who have a homeland, let us not rest until the Palestinian people secure their homeland too.

The CHAIRMAN: I would ask the representative of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the question of Palestine to convey our thanks to the Coordinating Committee for the valuable contribution that the non-governmental organizations have always made to the work of the Committee.

(The Chairman)

It is my honour now to announce that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has received messages of support and solidarity from many Heads of State and Government, from Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations, and I shall now read out a list of these messages. The texts of the messages will be published in a special bulletin of the Division of Palestinian Rights.

We have received messages from the following Heads of State: His Excellency General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt; His Excellency Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda; His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal, King of the Hachemite Kingdom of Jordan; His Excellency Mr. Soeharto, President of the Republic of Indonesia; His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal; His Excellency Captain Jerry John Rawlings, Head of State, President of the Provisional Council of National Defence of Ghana; His Highness Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Emir of the State of Bahrain; His Excellency Mr. Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq; His Excellency General Lansana Conte, President of the Provisional Council of National Recovery, Head of State, President of the Republic of Guinea; His Excellency Mr. Ahbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; Her Excellency Mrs. Corazon Aquino, President of the Republic of the Philippines; His Excellency Mr. Kaysone Phomvihane, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; His Excellency Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia; His Excellency Mr. George Vassiliou, President of the Republic of Cyprus; His

(The Chairman)

Excellency Mr. Andre Kolingba, President of the Central African Republic; His Excellency Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The following messages have been received from Heads of Government: His Excellency Mr. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India; His Excellency Dato'Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia; His Excellency Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; His Excellency Mr. Li Peng, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China; Her Excellency Mrs. Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; His Excellency Vo Van Kiet, President of the Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; His Excellency Mr. Anan Panyarachum, Prime Minister of Thailand; His Excellency Mr. Süleyman Demirel, Prime Minister of Turkey; His Excellency Mr. Edward Fenech Adami, Prime Minister of Malta.

The Committee has also received messages from Ministers for Foreign Affairs: His Excellency Luis Fernando Jaramillo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia; His Excellency Mr. Hussni Wald Didi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania; His Excellency Mr. Michio Watanabe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan; His Excellency Mr. Geza Jeszenszky, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary; His Excellency Mr. Andonis Samaras, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

(The Chairman)

His Excellency Mr. Farouk al-Sharaa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic; His Excellency Mr. Anatoly Zlenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine; His Excellency Mr. Césaire Rabenoro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Madagascar; His Excellency Mr. Hikmet Cetin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, in his capacity as President of the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs; His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Bishari, Secretary of the People's Committee of the People's Bureau for Liaison and International Cooperation of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; His Excellency Mr. Diego Cordovez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador; the Governments of Spain, Guyana and Argentina have also sent messages to the Committee; the Committee has also received messages from Mr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; from Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity; from the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States; the Committee has also received a message from the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania; and from the following non-governmental organizations: National Conference of Black Lawyers, Palestinian American Youth, United Nations Association of Sweden, Arab American Institute, Association Pays de Loire - Gaza - Jérusalem, Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre, Union of Palestinian American Women, Association of Anti-Fascists and Victims of Nazism in Israel, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Asian Committee of Solidarity with Arabs, World Federation of Trade Unions, International Movement of Conscientious War Resisters - Israeli Section, Women's International Democratic Federation, Palestinian Jewish Naturei Karta Organization.

(The Chairman)

On behalf of the entire Committee, I should like to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State, Heads of Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and to the organizations I have just listed, and to all participants for their constant efforts towards a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, and for the support they have always given to the objectives and activities of our Committee.

The statements which we have heard and the messages of solidarity which we have received today demonstrate once again the determination of the international community to progress towards the establishment of peace in the Middle East through the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and above all its right to self-determination and to the establishment of the independent Arab State of Palestine in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations, and in particular General Assembly resolution 181 (1947), whose forty-fourth anniversary we are celebrating today.

I can assure you that we, members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will spare no effort for the attainment of these objectives which are of vital importance not only to the Palestinian people but also for the triumph of peace and security in the region as a whole.

It is a pleasure for me now to call on His Excellency Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Mr. KADDOUMI (Palestine Liberation Organization) (interpretation from Arabic): I am pleased, at the conclusion of this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to extend greetings to all of you, and

(Mr. Kaddoumi, Palestine Liberation Organization)

thank you on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization for your brotherly participation in commemorating this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in its just struggle to achieve its inalienable national rights on its own soil, Palestine, and to liberate this land from Israeli occupation, and to establish its own independent State.

I am also delighted to thank the Presidents and Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and all the Governments and all the friendly organizations which have declared their solidarity by messages or by celebrations of this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

This international solidarity with oppressed peoples such as ours which are chafing under the yoke of occupation gives these peoples support and enhances their determination to achieve their objectives of freedom and independence.

Our gathering here today, in the United Nations, is but an expression of the importance of this forum and its effectiveness in the service of our causes. It is also an effective means for building a new international community that would be free of oppression, occupation and racial discrimination - a world of free independent peoples, a world of justice and peace.

The hope that we all look forward to in the wake of the Madrid peace conference needs to be nurtured by faithful efforts and good faith on the part of all the parties concerned. It also needs cooperation and continued international support. Our Palestinian people which has been struggling for very many years now to achieve its national objectives, yearns for liberty and is working faithfully to achieve a just peace. Its democratic struggle, which

(Mr. Kaddoumi, Palestine Liberation Organization)

started four years ago, through its intifadah inside our occupied Palestinian territories, is evidence of one people's intention to achieve peace.

In conclusion, I reiterate our thanks to all of you on this day. We deeply appreciate your faithful contribution. I should like also to extend appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its sincere efforts under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Absa Diallo. I should also like to express appreciation for the prominent role played by the non-governmental organizations, as well as the International Coordinating Committee for the Non-Governmental Organizations. I should also like to thank the United Nations Department of Public Information for their continued efforts to promote mass media awareness of the question of Palestine. I reiterate our thanks, our appreciation and our most sincere wishes to all your friendly peoples, hoping that we shall achieve our noble national objectives.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): As we near the end of today's commemorative meeting, I wish to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible and who has worked selflessly and with dedication. In particular I thank the members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department of Conference Services, especially the interpreters, the Department of Public Information and everyone who works behind the scenes to ensure our security.

I want to remind everyone that the exhibit arranged by the office of the Permanent Observer of Palestine, under the auspices of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will be opened at 2.45 p.m. in the public lobby of the General Assembly building.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.